**Product Placement in the Movies**

­The latest trend in advertising is to make it, well, less advertorial. The tendency is to move away from in-your-face ads, where the product is the star, to mini-movies­ or quasi-documentary vignettes that feature "real-life scenarios" with the product(s) hovering in the background. Some would argue it's a sort of "art imitating art imitating life" scenario -- where ads are imitating the practice of **product placement.**

Product placement is something that dates back to at least the early 1950s when Gordon's Gin paid to have Katharine Hepburn's character in "[The African Queen](http://www.imdb.com/Title?0043265)" toss loads of their product overboard. Since then, there have been countless placements in thousands of movies.

Think about it. You can probably remember quite a few examples. One of the most commonly discussed is the placement of [Reese's Pieces](http://www.reeses.com/products/pieces.asp) in the movie "[E.T.](http://www.et20.com/)" Originally intended for another product (they melt in your mouth, but not in your hand), this prime spot essentially catapulted these tiny peanut butter morsels into mainstream popularity. A slightly more recent and easily as effective example is the placement of [Red Stripe](http://www.redstripebeer.com/), a Jamaican-brewed beer, in the movie "[The Firm](http://www.eonline.com/Facts/Movies/0,60,30188,00.html)." According to [BusinessWeek Online](http://www.businessweek.com/), Red Stripe sales saw an increase of more than 50% in the U.S. market in the first month of the movie's release.

Now that you have an idea of what product placement is, let's take a look at some of the basics involved in leveraging a product placement arrangement.

As we mentioned earlier, arranged product placement deals fall into two categories:

* Trade-off of integration or placement for a supply of product
* Financial compensation for placement or integration

The most common type of deal is a simple exchange of the product for the placement. Using our existing example, let's say the production team wants The Architect to display a quirky affinity for a particular type of beverage. This will come across rather strongly over the course of the program (because the character even collects the drink's labels) -- which means the chosen product could get a lot of air time. It turns out that someone on the crew knows someone who works for [Honest Tea](http://www.honesttea.com/). The movie people approach the Honest Tea folks with a proposal and a deal is made; in exchange for the airtime, the cast and crew are provided with an ample supply of various Honest Tea drinks at work.

Sometimes, a gift of the product isn't an appropriate form of compensation, so money powers the deal. Imagine that the marketing team at [Tag Heuer](http://www.tagheuer.com/) has heard about this project and feels that, given the starpower of the actor playing The Architect, this project would be a great vehicle for showcasing its product. Someone from Tag Heuer approaches the set dresser with a financially lucrative proposal. Eventually, they come to an agreement. Consider this scene: Our male character (The Architect) stands outside a movie theater waiting to meet a friend. The camera pans down to show a slight tap of the actor's foot. Next, it moves up and zooms in to show him checking his wristwatch for the time. After switching from the actor's face to the face of the wristwatch, the camera pauses just long enough for you to really *see* the wristwatch. He's wearing a link-style, stainless steel Tag Heuer luxury sports-watch. The camera pans out and swings around, introducing a beautiful woman into the scene... During the next hour of the program, the wristwatch casually appears in several scenes.

Both teams are happy -- the integration of the Tag Heuer product is a success. Remember, the advertised product's role is to be part of an ensemble cast rather than the (obvious) star. Tag Heuer manages to reap the benefits of conventional advertising without being overly obvious or intrusive to the audience/consumers.

The next time you watch a movie, try to keep an eye out for products or brand-names you recognize. It's highly likely that you'll see one of the major soft drink companies represented. Is it [Coke](http://www.coca-cola.com/flashIndex1.html)? [Pepsi](http://www.pepsi.com/home.php)? [Snapple](http://www.snapple.com/home.asp?skip)? Once you've spotted something, see how many other scenes include that product. You'll start to see a trend. "How," you'll wonder, "can the actor hold the Coke can just the right way every time so that the logo is perfectly visible?"

Take a minute to comb through your movie memories. You'll probably recall at least a few of these now-famous product placements:

* [**Risky Business**](http://us.imdb.com/Title?0086200) - Ray-Ban sunglasses
* [**Back to the Future**](http://us.imdb.com/Title?0088763) - Pepsi products
* [**Demolition Man**](http://us.imdb.com/Title?0106697) - Taco Bell (In the future, *everything* is Taco Bell...)
* [**You've Got Mail**](http://us.imdb.com/Title?0128853) - America On-Line (AOL), Apple, IBM and Starbucks
* [**Austin Powers**](http://us.imdb.com/Title?0118655) - Pepsi and Starbucks
* [**Cast Away**](http://us.imdb.com/Title?0162222) - FedEx and Wilson
* [**Men in Black II**](http://us.imdb.com/Title?0120912) - Ray-Ban sunglasses, Mercedes Benz, Sprint, Burger King

Product placement in movies is so ubiquitous that it's even become something to parody on the big screen. Two movies that do a good job of this are "[Wayne's World](http://us.imdb.com/Title?0105793)" and "[Josie and the Pussycats](http://us.imdb.com/Title?0236348)." In Wayne's World, the two main characters hawk a variety of stuff, including Nuprin, [Pepsi](http://www.pepsiworld.com/home.php), [Pizza Hut](http://www.pizzahut.com/) and [Reebok](http://www.reebok.com/defaultPage.asp). The amusing part about this is that the product placement vignette takes place while the characters Wayne and Garth are lambasting the very thing they're doing. As Wayne says "Contract or no, I will not bow to any corporate sponsor," he is opening a Pizza Hut box and pulling out a slice of pizza. The camera lingers on the Pizza Hut logo and Wayne, holding the slice of pizza lovingly beside his face, smiles straight at the camera.

The movie "Josie and the Pussycats" takes the joke several steps further. A send-up on the music industry, "Josie and the Pussycats" manages to satirize name-brand integration throughout the film. To get an idea of just how saturated with brands, logos and products this movie is, here's a taste of what you can see in just the trailer alone (Keep in mind that the trailer is only two minutes and twenty-five seconds long!): [America Online](http://www.aol.com), [American Express](http://www114.americanexpress.com/homepage/mt_personal.shtml), [Bebe](http://www.bebe.com/TheShop/index.jsp), [Billboard Magazine](http://www.billboard.com/bb/index.jsp), [Bugles](http://www.generalmills.com/corporate/businesses/snacks/), [Campbell's Soup](http://www.campbellsoup.com/index.asp), [Coke](http://www.coca-cola.com/flashIndex1.html), [Entertainment Weekly Magazine](http://www.ew.com/ew/), [Evian](http://www.evian.com/), [Ford](http://www.ford.com/en/default.htm), [Gatorade](http://www.gatorade.com/), [Kodak](http://www.kodak.com/eknec/PageQuerier.jhtml;jsessionid), [Krispy Kreme](http://www.krispykreme.com/), [McDonald's](http://www.mcdonalds.com/), [Milky Way](http://www.mmmars.com/cai/mway/index.html), [Motorola](http://www.motorola.com/), [Pepperidge Farm Cookies](http://www.campbellsoup.com/pepperidge_farm_cookies.asp), [Pizza Hut](http://www.pizzahut.com/), [Pringles](http://www.pringles.com/index2.html), [Puma](http://www.puma.com/), [Ray-Ban](http://www.ray-ban.com/), [Sega](http://www.sega.com/index.jhtml), [Starbucks](http://www.starbucks.com/Default.asp?cookie%5Ftest), [Steve Madden](http://www.stevemadden.com/), [Target](http://www.target.com/gp/homepage.html/602-1652803-6521435), and [T.J. Maxx](http://www.tjmaxx.com/).

While watching The Island, I would like you to note down all instances of product placement, we will discuss them after we have viewed the film.